

# Risk



## J620: Public Relations Planning and Theory (Spring 2009)

Risk communication includes drawing people's attention to risk and helping them mitigate it, as well as helping people feel comfortable with risk. We will explore the foundation of knowledge in both of these areas and apply it to various contexts, such as health and the environment. In addition, we will examine responses to situations in which expert perceptions of risk differ from public perceptions. To accommodate all class members, we will approach risk communication from both an institutional perspective and from an activist perspective. We will also examine risk communication through a critical lens as we explore ethical considerations.

Class Meetings  
Friday: 9 a.m. to noon  
Allen 307

Tiffany Gallicano, Ph.D.  
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### Office Hours

Tuesday: 11 a.m. to noon  
Thursday: 11 a.m. to noon  
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.  
Friday: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

# Communication



## Course Objectives

- Appreciate the importance of cultural considerations in the development of risk messages
- Evaluate risk messages based on message design theories
- Identify ways to segment audiences for targeted risk communication campaigns
- Predict public opinions about risk based on cultural rationality and heuristics
- Assess the effectiveness of various responses to risk situations
- Describe ways to effectively involve the public in risk decisions
- Characterize ethical challenges in risk communication and evaluate response options
- Advance knowledge about risk communication in an area of your specialty

## Books and Articles

“Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach”  
by Timothy L. Sellnow, Robert R. Ulmer, Matthew W. Seeger, and Robert S. Little  
New York: Springer  
ISBN: 978-0-387-79727-4

“Trust Us, We’re Experts! How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future”  
by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber  
New York: Tarcher/Putnam  
ISBN: 1-58542-139-1

Additional reading can be found on Blackboard:  
<https://blackboard.uoregon.edu>

## Assessment

Paper or project: 80 points

Grading criteria:

1. Content
2. Organization of thought
3. Writing skills

In general, late work would result in a one letter grade deduction per week that it is late.

Participation: 20 points

Participation is based on class preparation and meaningful contributions to class discussion each week (without dominating the discussion), respecting others’ opinions, e-mailing three discussion questions for each class, and being on time to class.

## Book Review

You could review a book about risk communication in an area that interests you. This option is contingent upon finding a journal editor or book review editor who confirms their interest in having you submit a review of the particular book. Depending on the editor's time constraints, you would submit the book review for publication either during class or at the conclusion of spring quarter.

Evaluation of the first quarter of the book: 15 points  
Evaluation of the second quarter of the book: 15 points  
Evaluation of the third quarter of the book: 15 points  
Evaluation of the fourth quarter of the book: 15 points  
Final book review: 20 points

## Special Requests

See me if you have concerns or special needs. I am happy to work with you.

## Research Paper: Interviews, Focus Groups, or Both

For this option, you would write the first half of a research paper, collect part of your data, and transcribe your data. You could partner with classmates if you would like. If you work on a team, each team member would be responsible for conducting four interviews or two focus groups (or two interviews and one focus group).

Introduction (one to two pages): 5 points  
Literature review and research questions (four to five pages): 15 points  
Method (three pages): 15 points  
Transcripts of four interviews or of two focus groups (per team member): 30 points  
Final paper: 15 points  
(Introduction, literature review, method, references, and transcripts as appendices)

## Research Paper or Rhetorical Criticism

For this option, you could partner with classmates if you would like. If you write rhetorical criticism that does not have the traditional sections below, we would work out an alternative point system and timeline for deadlines.

Introduction (one to two pages): 5 points  
Literature review and research questions or hypotheses (four to five pages): 15 points  
Method (three pages): 15 points  
Results: 15 points  
Discussion (end by page 25): 15 points  
Final paper: 15 points

## Create A Project

Propose a project. For example, you could design risk communication materials, conduct message testing via focus groups, and write a report about the findings. Or you could write a communications crisis plan. Another option is to continue working on a risk communication paper.

**J620: Public Relations Planning Theory**  
**Spring 2009, Allen 307**

**Friday, April 3 (Week One): Cultural Barriers to Risk Communication**

9 a.m. Class overview, introductions, preparation for next week

9:15 a.m. Go to EMU ballroom for the University of Oregon Conference on HIV/AIDS in Africa

9:30 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. “The Social and Cultural Dimensions of AIDS: Interpreting ‘Family,’ ‘Community’ and ‘Sexuality’ in Southern Africa” by Pauline Peters, Ph.D., Lecturer in Public Policy. John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. “Integrating sociocultural approaches into the fight against AIDS: open discussion.” Panelists Badege Bishaw (OSU; chair), Laurence Becker (OSU) and Peter Walker (UO) will follow-up on Dr. Peters’ speech with brief comments, followed by open discussion with Dr. Peters and conference participants. If you need to leave at 11:50 a.m., sit near the back of the room. Location: Gumwood Room.

*Assignment due*

- By e-mail, phone, or in person, set up a time to meet with me today or next week to discuss project ideas

**Saturday, April 4 (Optional)**

You are welcome to replace any assigned reading next week with one of the sessions below. You can replace up to three readings of your choice next week based on the number of sessions you attend. Please be prepared to share what you learned with the class.

9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. “Bridging Well-Intentioned Policy and Everyday Reality: Ensuring Programs that Work,” Michael Kaplan. Executive Director, Cascade AIDS Project, Location: EMU Ballroom.

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. “Challenges of socio-cultural approaches to AIDS: from analysis to action.” The sociocultural approach to AIDS has produced nuanced understandings of gender scripts, inter-generational social roles, and local dynamics of power alongside a powerful sense that we cannot talk seriously about an AIDS strategy divorced from a social justice agenda. How do we move from rich analysis and subtleties of data to action that is informed by socio-cultural understanding, that does not run afoul on the shoals of one-size-fits-all remedies? Location: Fir Room.

3 p.m. “Non-profits working in Africa: lessons learned and opportunities ahead.” This session features representatives of non-profit groups that support community development, education and/or healthcare in HIV/AIDS-affected regions of Africa. Each panelist will briefly share challenges, lessons learned, and future opportunities in their organization’s activities, followed by open discussion. Location: Fir Room.

## **Friday, April 10 (Week Two): Developing Culturally Appropriate Health Campaigns for International Audiences and U.S. Minority Audiences**

### *Reading due*

- “Privileging Identity, Difference, and Power: The Circuit of Culture as a Basis for Public Relations Theory,” by Patricia Curtin and Kenn Gaither, at least pages 97-105
- “Contested Notions of Issue Identity in International Public Relations: A Case Study,” by Patricia Curtin
- “Enhancing the Effectiveness of HIV/AIDS Prevention Programs Targeted to Unique Population Groups in Thailand: Lessons Learned From Applying Concepts of Diffusion of Innovation and Social Marketing,” by Peer Svenkerud and Arvind Singhal
- “Race, Gender, and Welfare Reform: The Antinatalist Response,” by Susan Thomas, from the bottom of page 421-425
- “The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women,” by Jane Lawrence, at least page 1
- Readings about the Tuskegee study:  
<http://www.tuskegee.edu/Global/Story.asp?s=1207598>  
<http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/2002/jul/tuskegee/>
- “Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach,” by Timothy Sellnow, Robert Ulmer, Matthew Seeger, and Robert Littlefield, pages 33-48
- “Trust Influences Response to Public Health Messages During a Bioterrorist Event, by Lisa Meredith et al., at least pages 227-229
- “Situational Theory of Publics,” summary by one of Jim Grunig’s former students (read before Curry’s and Vardeman’s studies)
- “Black Women’s Meaning-Making of HIV/AIDS Campaigns: A Black Feminist Approach to the Impact of Race on the Reception of Targeted Health Communication,” by Tiphane P. Curry, read pages 1-2, the bottom of page 11-22, bottom of page 25-58
- “The Use of Community-Based Interventions to Reduce the Barriers of Severely Constrained Publics,” by Tiffany Derville and Katherine McComas
- “Women’s Meaning Making of Cervical Cancer Campaigns: Using a Cultural Approach to Redefine Women’s Involvement with Their Health,” by Jennifer Vardeman, at least read pages 1-4, 34, 76-80

Read one of the articles below:

- “Development of Targeted Message Concepts for Recent Asian Immigrants About Secondhand Smoke,” by Doug Brugge et al.
- “Using Culture-Centered Qualitative Formative Research to Design Broadcast Messages for HIV Prevention for African American Adolescents,” by Jennifer Horner et al.
- “Cost-Effectiveness of Environmental-Structural Communication Interventions for HIV Prevention in the Female Sex Industry in the Dominican Republic,” by Michael Sweat et al.

*Assignment due*

- Research paper option: research questions or hypotheses and a list of topics you'll explore in your literature review
- Alternative project option: project description with deliverables and due dates
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday based on the reading

**Friday, April 17 (Week Three): Message Design Theories, Models, and Considerations**

- |                                      |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Metaphor                           | • Health belief model          | • Gain vs. loss            |
| • Humor                              | • Social learning theory       | • message framing          |
| • Narrative paradigm                 | • Elaboration likelihood model | • Sensation seeking        |
| • Explicit versus implicit messages  | • Stages of change model       | • Optimistic bias          |
| • Extended parallel processing model |                                | • Emotional appeals        |
|                                      |                                | • Diffusion of innovations |

*Reading due*

- “We’ve Done Drugs Keith Richards Never Heard Of: A Qualitative Study of Young Adult Cancer Narratives Online,” by Katie Pontius (Stansberry), at least pages 5-6, 13-16, 19-23, 37-38, 52-57, 62-67, 75-76, 83-87, 96-97
- Excerpt about humor from “Debunking Stereotypes and Promoting Helpful Portrayals in Popular Culture,” by Tiffany Derville
- “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument,” by Walter Fisher
- “The Effects of Message Framing on Response to Environmental Communications,” by Joel Davis
- Excerpt from “Effective Health Risk Messages: A Step-By-Step Guide,” by Kim Witte, Gary Meter, and Dennis Martell
- “Can Fear Arousal in Public Health Campaigns Contribute to the Decline of HIV Prevalence?” by Edward Green and Kim Witte
- “Message Design Theory in Anti-Methamphetamine PSAs: A Case Study of the Montana Meth Project,” by Stacey Malstrom, at least pages 9-42
- Excerpt from “Diffusion of Innovations,” by Everett Rogers
- “A 10-Year Retrospective of Research in Health Mass Media Campaigns: Where Do We Go From Here?” by Seth Noar

*Assignment due*

- Research paper option: two copies of a completed and signed IRB application
- Book review option: printed copy of an e-mail from a book review editor or journal editor expressing interest in having you review a particular book (the book needs to involve risk communication)
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday
- Bring an example of risk communication to class and lead the class in analyzing it based on the readings for today; if you'd like to use a video clip or other electronic communication, e-mail it to me by Thursday

## **Friday, April 24 (Week Four): Risk Communication Fundamentals and Public Involvement**

### *Reading due*

- ❑ “Strategic Risk Communication: Adding Value to Society,” by Michael Palenchar and Robert Heath
- ❑ “Another Part of the Risk Communication Model: Analysis of Communication Processes and Message Content,” by Michael Palenchar and Robert Heath
- ❑ “Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach,” by Timothy Sellnow, Robert Ulmer, Matthew Seeger, and Robert Littlefield, pages 3-30
- ❑ “Public Meetings About Suspected Cancer Clusters: The Impact of Voice, Interactional Justice, and Risk Perception on Attendees’ Attitudes in Six Communities,” by Katherine McComas et al.
- ❑ “Community Relationship Building: Local Leadership in the Risk Communication Infrastructure,” by Robert Heath et al.
- ❑ “Risk Communication and Community Right to Know: A Public Relations Obligation to Inform,” by Michael Palenchar
- ❑ “Involving the Public in Risk Communication,” by Katherine McComas
- ❑ “Psychological Factors Influencing People’s Reactions to Risk Information,” by Katherine McComas
- ❑ “Perception of Risk,” by Paul Slovic
- ❑ “Defining Moments in Risk Communication Research: 1996-2005,” by Katherine McComas
- ❑ “Trust Us, We’re Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future,” by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, pages 289-315

### *Assignment due*

- ❑ Research paper option: introduction (one to two pages)
- ❑ E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

## **Friday, May 1 (Week Five): Issues Management, Crisis Management and Media Relations**

(Research paper option: start working on literature review this week)

(Book review option: read first quarter of book this week)

### *Reading due*

- ❑ Excerpt from “Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach,” by Kathleen Fearn-Banks
- ❑ “Six Areas for Crisis Communication,” by Peter Sandman
- ❑ “Four Kinds of Risk Communication,” by Peter Sandman
- ❑ “Risk Communication in Action: The Tools of Message Mapping,” by Ivy Lin and Dan Petersen on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency
- ❑ “Communication During Crisis: Use of Blogs as a Relationship Management Tool,” by Kaye Sweetser and Emily Metzgar
- ❑ “An Empirical Analysis of Image Restoration: Texaco’s Racism Crisis,” by Timothy Coombs and Lainien Schmidt

- “Comparing Apology to Equivalent Crisis Response Strategies: Clarifying Apology’s Role and Value in Crisis Communication,” by Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay
- “Crisis Communication: Guidelines for Action,” by Peter Sandman and Jody Lanard (download five pdf documents from Blackboard)
- “Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials,” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- “Avian Flu, a Pandemic & the Role of Journalists,” excerpts from a conference
- “McDonald’s Corporation and the Issue of Health and Nutrition: An Arthur Page Society Case Study in Issues Management,” by Terri Ann Bailey

*Assignment due*

- Research paper option: literature review (three to five pages), research questions, and references in a recognized style (also submit revised introduction with edited draft)
- Book review option: evaluation of the first quarter of the book
- Alternative project: Submit progress report or other agreed upon component
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

**Friday, May 8 (Week Six): Environmental Communication from Activist and Industry Perspectives**

Special guests: Harsha Gangadharbatla, Ph.D. (at 9 a.m.) and  
Jon Palfreman, Ph.D. (at 10 a.m.)

*Reading due*

- “Trust Us, We’re Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future,” by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, pages 267-288
- “Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of ‘An Inconvenient Truth,’” by Thomas Rosteck and Thomas Frenz
- “Improving Communication of Uncertainty in the Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,” by David Budescu, Stephen Broomell, and Han-Hui Por
- “Experience-Based and Description-Based Perceptions of Long-Term Risk: Why Global Warming Does Not Scare Us (Yet),” by Elke Weber
- “Radical Activist Tactics: Overturning Public Relations Conceptualizations,” by Tiffany Derville
- “Weathercocks & Signposts: The Environment at a Crossroads,” by Tom Crompton for the WWF
- Greenwashing Index: Promoted by EnviroMedia Social Marketing and the University of Oregon: <http://www.greenwashingindex.com/>
- Case study of greenwashing accusations of organic dairy farming (additional details will be discussed in class):  
The Organic Consumer’s Association’s encouragement to boycott certain organic milk labels/manufacturers:  
[http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/oca/campaign.jsp?campaign\\_KEY=4756](http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/oca/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=4756)



The Cornucopia Institute's encouragement of reforming the USDA organic program standards in light of organic factory farming:  
<http://www.cornucopia.org/horizon-factory-farm-photo-gallery/aurora-factory-farm-photo-gallery/>

- Excerpt from "Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America," edited by Carl Herndl and Stuart Brown

*Assignment due*

- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

**Friday, May 15 (Week Seven): Affect and Numeracy in Risk Communication**

(Research paper option: start working on method section this week)

(Book review option: read second quarter of book this week)

Special guests: Ellen Peters, Ph.D., and Paul Slovic, Ph.D.

*Reading due*

- "Culture and Identity-Protective Cognition: Explaining the White Male Effect in Risk Perception," by Dan Kahan, Donald Braman, John Gastil, Paul Slovic, and C.K. Mertz
- "The Affect Heuristic," by Paul Slovic, Melissa Finucane, Ellen Peters, and Donald MacGregor
- "When Compassion Fails; Stalin Knew That People Respond Less Strongly to Mass Murder Than to Individual Tragedy. That's Why Emotion Alone Won't Prevent Genocide," by Paul Slovic
- "'If I Look at the Mass I Will Never Act': Psychic Numbing and Genocide," by Paul Slovic
- "Affect, Risk Perception and Future Optimism After the Tsunami Disaster," by Daniel Vastfjall, Ellen Peters, and Paul Slovic
- "Risk as Analysis and Risk as Feelings: Some Thoughts About Affect, Reason, Risk, and Rationality," by Paul Slovic, Melissa Finucane, Ellen Peters, and Donald MacGregor
- "The Affect Heuristic in Judgments of Risks and Benefits," by Melissa Finucane, Ali Alhakami, Paul Slovic, and Stephen Johnson
- "Numeracy and Decision Making," by Ellen Peters, Daniel Vastfjall, Paul Slovic, C.K. Mertz, Ketti Mazzocco, and Stephan Dickert
- "Numeracy Skill and the Communication, Comprehension, and Use of Risk-Benefit Information," by Ellen Peters, Judith Hibbard, Paul Slovic, and Nathan Dieckmann

*Assignment due*

- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

## **Friday, May 22 (Week Eight): Risk Communication and Ethics**

Special guest: Tom Bivins, Ph.D.

### *Reading due*

- “Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach,” by Timothy Sellnow, Robert Ulmer, Matthew Seeger, and Robert Littlefield, pages 147-177
- “Trust Us, We’re Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future,” by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, pages 7-52, 75-98
- Excerpt from “Gaining Influence in Public Relations: The Role of Resistance in Practice,” by Bruce Berger and Bryan Reber
- “Code of Ethics,” by the Public Relations Society of America
- Other readings to be selected by Dr. Bivins

### *Assignment due*

- Research paper option: method (three pages) and references in a recognized style (also submit revised introduction, literature review, and research questions with edited drafts)
- Book review option: evaluation of the second quarter of the book
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

## **Friday, May 29 (Week Nine): Risk Case Studies**

(Book review option: read third quarter of book this week)

(I expect to have IRB applications approved by today.)

### *Reading due*

- “Risk Communication, the West Nile Virus Epidemic, and Bioterrorism: Responding to the Communication Challenges Posed by the Intentional or Unintentional Release of a Pathogen in an Urban Setting,” by Vincent Covello et al.
- “Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach,” by Timothy Sellnow, Robert Ulmer, Matthew Seeger, and Robert Littlefield, pages 53-63, 77-103
- “Trust Us, We’re Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future,” by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, pages 53-70, 195-266

### *Assignment due*

- Research paper option for interviews and focus groups: show evidence of having conducted two interviews or one focus group
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

## **Friday, June 5 (Week Ten): Risk Case Studies**

Be prepared to discuss your paper, project, or book review.

### *Reading due*

- “Effective Risk Communication: A Message-Centered Approach,” by Timothy Sellnow, Robert Ulmer, Matthew Seeger, and Robert Littlefield, pages 65-74, 105-145

- “Trust Us, We’re Experts: How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles With Your Future,” by Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, pages 99-189

*Assignment due*

- Research paper option for interviews and focus groups: show evidence of having conducted your third and fourth interviews or your second focus group
- Book review option: evaluation of the third quarter of the book
- E-mail at least three questions you would like to discuss in class by Thursday

**Friday, June 12 (Final Papers Due)**

Final paper, book review, or alternative project due by 5 p.m. to the box on my office door (Allen 215C). Feel free to submit your paper early.